

EXHIBIT 19

DATE 2/18/15

HB 477

Testimony in opposition to HB477 Feb 18, 2015

My name is Bruce Beckwith, I live in Missoula Montana.

I am a retired physician whose career as a pathologist included functioning for many years as a medical examiner in the states of California and Washington (long before the adoption of the Washington legislation allowing aid in dying under specified circumstances. During those years I dealt with a great many deaths that confirmed my strong support for continuing to allow physicians to administer assistance under appropriate circumstances. If every death was either sudden and unexpected, or slow and comfortable for the dying person, this support would not be necessary. But having performed postmortem examinations on hundreds of individuals who died after prolonged agony from pain, slowly progressive respiratory failure, helplessness, and other unpleasant situations beyond the capability for cure or amelioration by medical means.

Many issues that you as legislators confront deal with the issue of protecting the right to privacy. I can imagine no situation more appropriate for application of that principle than in the case of a hopelessly ill individual experiencing experiences or situations beyond the capability for effective amelioration, whose only wish is to have a peaceful and rapid end to their suffering. No person with personal beliefs incompatible with this wish should ever be forced to seek death in this manner, but neither should they have the right to force all others to comply with those beliefs.

Vote no on HB477

Respectfully submitted,
J. Bruce Beckwith MD
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